

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1806

October 27, 2022

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

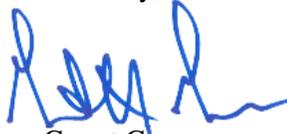
Like many law enforcement agencies across the country, the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office (EBRSO) is challenged with a record-setting increase in violent crime. Nationwide, the murder rate is at its highest level in nearly 25 years. Louisiana's capital city is consistently listed among the top 10 most dangerous cities in America and in 2021 Baton Rouge reported 170 homicides, which is 146 percent higher than the national average. From January to September 2022, law enforcement made more than 3100 felony arrests in the Baton Rouge area. Unfortunately, intake restrictions at the Louisiana State Police (LSP) Crime Lab are limiting the ability of law enforcement in the Capital Region to make these charges stick and keep violent criminals off the street.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022, which was signed into law on March 15, 2022, included Community Project Funding we secured for EBRSO to purchase and equip a Rapid DNA test system to mitigate the backlog in evidence processing. Rapid DNA analysis is a new technology being implemented by federal, state, and local law enforcement across the country to expedite DNA testing and keep the investigative process moving forward in its most critical moments. While most genetic tests take 24-72 hours in the best conditions, Rapid DNA can provide accurate and hands-free results from a cheek swab in as little as 90 minutes. To date, this funding has yet to be awarded to EBRSO.

It is crucial that the Department of Justice execute Congress's vision and award this funding to EBRSO as soon as possible. According to the District Attorney's office, Baton Rouge contributes 30-35% of the evidence processed at the LSP Crime Lab, which currently has a backlog of more than 3,000 cases. EBRSO's purchase of a Rapid DNA system will help law enforcement quickly generate investigative leads, solve crimes more rapidly, keep offenders off the street, and ensure the safety of families in Louisiana. Congress has already provided the funds: it is time to cut the red tape and get these dollars out the door.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Garret Graves', with a stylized, cursive script.

Garret Graves
Member of Congress